

BEACH BOYS STOMP - DEC '91

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Anniversary (however celebrated), Brian & Bruce's 50th birthdays, and **STOMP's** 15th year of operations. What a long, strange trip it's been...

The traditional year's end salutations: Happy Birthday Carl, 45 on 21st December, and a spin of "Forever" for Dennis on the 4th and 28th of the same month, eight years gone but still in our thoughts... and to all our subscribers and readers, from Mike, Chris, Trevor, Roy, Nick, Pip and yours truly, Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

ANDREW G DOE

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Editorial

So, that was 1991, a year during which suddenly!... nothing very much happened at all. Yes, over here we had some concerts (and rather good ones at that) but otherwise the bulk of the year was taken up by waiting for Brian's cases to come to court, and by Bruce continually talking about some vague new album project. Of plans for the 30th Anniversary - nothing, or at least nothing public.

If 1991 was fallow for the Beach Boys, for Brian it was positively barren: the hardly-stunning "Country Feelin's" aside, it was for his non-musical activities that he made headlines, to which can now be added a furor surrounding his so-called 'autobiography' and the originality thereof. That the Beach Boys are winding down has long been taken for granted... but must we now question the continuing validity of Brian Wilson as a solo artist? It's been over three years since BRIAN WILSON and, if rumours are to be believed, SWEET INSANITY may be on indefinite hold due in no small part to it's not being very good. Will the conclusion of the lawsuit see Brian embark on a new creative surge? Anyone's guess...

Whatever, if for nothing else 1992 will be notable for the band's 30th

A SECOND CALIFORNIA MYTH

'Desper describes a harried attempt to keep up with Brian: "He worked very fast. He would pick up the guitar and record the guitar part. Then he'd play the bass part. Then, the organ. Another guitar... He just has this natural gift to master keyboards and strings, and he's even good at drums. I used to rent all sorts of exotic instruments for Brian. In just a couple of days or experimentation, Brian could completely grasp any instrument... The only thing he wasn't good at was horns. He didn't have the lip for it... I've probably erased more Brian Wilson than most people have heard.'" (From David Leaf's 1985 book *The Beach Boys*).

'My engineer, Steve Desper, rented all sorts of instruments for me. Working furiously, before I lost the motivation, I recorded countless songs, playing the guitar part, then the bass, perhaps an organ or harpsichord, then drums. I could pretty much play any instrument, except horns, for which I never had the lip. But after recording, I usually became dissatisfied and destroyed the tapes. Desper once complained that he erased more Brian Wilson songs than most people ever heard.' (From Brian Wilson's 'autobiography', 1991.)

* * * * *

The basic problem with Brian's 'autobiography' was always going to be Brian, with Landy running a close second: Brian because, as much as I love and respect him as a human being and musician, it is undeniable that, given his past problems and indulgencies, he's incapable of producing a true (i.e. self-penned) recollection of the last 49 years... and Landy because his autocratic relationship with Brian effectively precludes a balanced picture.

It's been said, and with considerable justification, that "Wouldn't It Be Nice" was conceived and issued less as a document of Brian Wilson, more as a central tenet - or at the very least a substantial buttress - in Landy's defence of the conservatorship (custodial) lawsuit laid against him by those seeking to wrest Brian from his control. Pared back to basics, the book consists of two sections: the first seeks to explain how Brian got to be... well, Brian, due to just about everyone in his inner circle pressuring him in ways subtle and overt (a tenable and generally accepted theory in which the leading roles are taken by that well-known triumvirate of evil intent, Murry Wilson, Mike Love and Capitol Records), whilst the second elevates Landy and his associates to something only slightly less than sainthood during their retrieval of Brian from the brink in 1976 and again in 1983.

Let's not pretend that Landy didn't save Brian's life, twice: without him, we'd have no Brian to anguish over, and for that he deserves all the credit going. But, even to the casual observer, his actions and methods of late appear designed less for Brian's long term welfare and ultimate independence, more to retain a degree of control over an easily influenced subject that borders on the obscene.

Enough of possible motives behind the book - what of the volume itself? Frankly it is as shoddy in execution as the conception may be dubious. This isn't to blame Brian, as the growing feeling is that he had very little to do with the actual production and apparently equally little concerning checking and proof-reading. There is a very strong possibility that "Wouldn't It Be Nice" is actionable in it's shameless and blatant plagiarism: the example which opens this review is but one of many and is far from being the most obvious. Any fan with a reasonably comprehensive

BB/BW library and archive will swiftly realise that not only does Todd Gold lift sections almost piecemeal from David Leaf's superb biography, but also from Steve Gaines's scurrilous *Heroes And Villains* - errors uncorrected - and from every major article from the original 1964 issue of *Teen Set* (mis-titled *Teen Scene*) to date. Time and time again, any pull the narrative might exert is dissipated as the reader stumbles across familiar material, and tries to recall where he or she last read it. For this theft, Todd Gold must stand accused of the grossest breach of professional ethics, for nowhere is the practise even hinted at: worse, it insults the reader's intelligence. Did they (Landy and Gold) really think we wouldn't notice?

Complementing - for want of a better phrase - outright theft of source material is sloppy research and equally poor proof-reading. Whilst there may not be literally a major error on every page, after a while, you have to stop counting, and the cumulative impression is that if anyone did check and proof-read, then that person's knowledge of Brian, the Beach Boys and their music is so close to zero as to make no difference. A few of my 'favourites', just for the flavour: "My Dad later sold ("The Surfer Moon") to Safari Records"... who just happened to have the Wilson's home address printed on the label. On consecutive pages, the Beatles "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" is stated as having sold "half a million copies in ten days" and 500,000 copies in less than a week". On page 154, 'Brian' makes an astonishing claim; by early November 1966 "Good Vibrations" - released 10th October - is stated to have sold more than 16 million copies... Finally, possibly the most unforgiveable of all: during a session for "Heroes and Villains", Mike collars Van Dyke Parks about the lyrics; "I want to know what... 'Over and over the crow cries uncover the corn-field' means." The real Brian Wilson might not have the world's greatest memory, as he frequently admits - but I think he'd remember which words belong to "Heroes", and which to "Cabin Essence"...

I put Brian in quotes, or refer to 'the real Brian' to underline that, while this is a story of Brian Wilson, and a more troubling and painful one than we've been shown before, by no criterion at all is this Brian Wilson's story. Odd, isolated moments ring true, but overwhelmingly the literary piracy coupled with a style of expression Brian has failed to exhibit over the past 30 years (e.g. "... my immersion in the baptismal fires of recovery") force the conclusion that *Wouldn't It Be Nice* is a production of Landy and Gold.

If any satisfaction can be drawn from this sorry exercise in deception and robbery on a grand scale, it could be that, perversely, *Wouldn't It Be Nice* may actually disprove the tenet to which many feel it owes its existence.. for if Brian were truly in charge of his own life and able to exercise his own will, it's inconceivable that he would have allowed something that claims to be his own story to see the light of day in this form. Brian used to be a perfectionist... and he's never stopped being absolutely honest. Brian would never lie to anyone the way *Wouldn't It Be Nice* does.

AGD

Brian's book is available from

-oOo-

Telephone for details.

compē'ndi|um *n.* Bookshop. [*"Britains best bookshop"* TIMEOUT]. 234 Camden High Street London NW1 8QS; (telephone) 071.485 8944 and 071.267 1525. (fax) 071.267 0193. Open Monday to Saturday 10-6 & Sunday 12-6. Mail order a speciality

THE WILSON PROJECT

For many years serious collectors of the Beach Boys, or any other early/mid sixties band, filled our shelves with singles, E.P.s and, if we could accord them, L.P.s. We also perhaps had the odd book of press cuttings and fan club materials. Our time was spent listening and scanning the weekly pop mags for news. The Derek Taylor column in Disc and Music Echo was probably the best for the Beach Boys. It was not until the mid '70s that rock publishing really got going and started producing a steady stream of tomes about our various heroes. I well remember quite a rush of excitement when I got my first book about the Beach Boys from the States. Written by Ken Barnes, "The Beach Boys - A Biography in Words and Pictures" came out in 1976. 54 pages including many full page photos was a trifle light in retrospect, but at the time it was thrilling that there was a book at all! The following year saw the arrival of "The Beach Boys" by John Tobler which followed a similar format to Ken's book but gave us 96 pages, in hardback and 4 colour printing! A subsequent paperback version of this one with a different cover seemed much less substantial, and was eventually to be found in profusion in W.H. Smith sales for the princely sum of 12½p. By this time we were fast approaching the birth of STOMP and California Music who brought us news of publication of David Leaf's "The Beach Boys & The California Myth" 1978 and Byron Preiss's "The Beach Boys" (Authorised Biography) 1979. These were the real thing, with the former rightly acknowledged as the book to read on the band. Leaf's book contained rare and intimate photos and insights into which we delved, cogitated over and discussed. The Preiss book was more of a glossy fan homage to the image, but should not be undervalued as it included many fascinating quotes from relevant people and a fun mid section of colour paintings and interpretations of the band and some of their song titles. Unlike Leaf's book which was an essential read, this one was virtually impossible to read owing to the broken and mixed text, but was fascinating to dip into. I wouldn't be without either.

Brad Elliott's "Surf's Up" arrived in 1982. It is of course indispensable but owing to the fact that it is essentially a reference work does not figure in the comparisons and purpose of this piece.

Then came a gap until 1985 when another two contrasting books emerged: "The Beach Boys" by Dean Anthony and "The Beach Boys Silver Anniversary" by John Millward. The Anthony book was glossy but totally lacking substance. Its only saving grace was its colour and a few of the photos culled from colour libraries. The Millward book, although it told us nothing much new, had a more substantial feel and look to it. At least Millward had made the most of interesting and rarer photos. 1985 also saw the updated and hardback version of the David Leaf book which we could order with customised autographs thus making it a desirable re-purchase, especially as the binding on the first edition was so poor. The following year saw the issue of Stephen Gaines's "Heroes and Villains" which has been the most widely available of all the books on the band and undoubtedly the most criticised because the author dug out the dirt and used it in questionable ways. Gaines had no fan's rose-tinted specs in the way some of the others had, and it was his book that spawned the weak and often incorrect recent film. However, even with all the justifiable criticisms, Gaines's book undoubtedly has its place alongside all the others simply because it does dwell on the dark side of the people in and around the band. For years we have been reading about and discussing the state of the group and their motivations or lack of them. Brian always is central to these considerations and most recent press attention has

been centred on him and his problems. Doubtless we all have our own thoughts but it is difficult to read between the often conflicting lines. His wonderful arrival at the '88 Convention gave us a chance to examine him at close quarters for a fair time, and it is with such thoughts in mind that the next two books will be required reading.

Brian's own autobiography will be written about at length I'm sure, and will present one side of the picture: that which Brian sees, or thinks he sees, or is told to see. To help us decide which interpretation is closest to the truth "The Wilson Project" by Stephen J McParland forms an essential background. Stephen, along with David Leaf, is an acknowledged and respected author and expert. He is largely responsible for the fanzines "Beach Boys Australia" and "California Music" and countless other books and specials. Through his work for "California Music" he contacted Gary Usher and, to cut a long story short, became very close to him, staying with his family whilst researching an official biography. During this time Usher linked with Brian again through Dr Landy and work began on rehabilitating Brian to '80s recording techniques and preparing tracks for the solo album. The new book "The Wilson Project" chronicles the period Usher worked with Brian from May '86 to June '87. It does this through extensive use of a daily journal and other notes that Usher kept during the whole period. McParland had regular notes from Usher during this time, and has assembled the whole sorry episode into a fascinating text of well over 100 dense A4 pages. As well as an incredibly detailed record of the period, it has distinct implications as to what went before and what has come after, and indeed is still to come. It offers insights into individual Beach Boys, their motivations and their power structures, but mostly it illuminates some very dark corners of the Wilson/Landy relationship. There are dozens of extracts I could quote, but many of them come down to one main point: that Brian is trapped in a plethora of ways and realises he always will be, given the present situation. Many parts of the book are saddening, many make me angry, many make me think that in a way we have all been duped over the years. As with any writing, however, we have to decide about its objectivity and truth. Brian's autobiography apparently mentions this journal and suggests it is not truthful or does not represent how it really was. Whilst I found myself even being annoyed at Usher for what appeared to be naivety and almost subservience at times, I have no personal doubt that what is written in "The Wilson Project" represents a true picture of how it was, and is, and...

Stephen McParland has assembled and presented the material excellently as always in what is at present only a limited edition. I have personally been aware of the material for four years and know well what it meant to the late Gary Usher, and now means to Stephen who hopes to see the story picked up by a major publisher. In the meantime let the debate run in the letters pages of **STOMP**.

KINGSLEY ABBOTT

-oOo-

*"So maybe Beach Boys fans
are stupid and we can
dismiss the whole thing.
But maybe that's a pretty
snotty attitude to take;
maybe something is
happening here that we
just ought to know about."*

PAUL WILLIAMS

THE WILSON PROJECT

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PAUL WILLIAMS

THE WILSON PROJECT

IS THE STORY OF

A BEACH BOY BRIAN WILSON

A DOCTOR GENE LANDY

AND A FRIEND GARY USHER

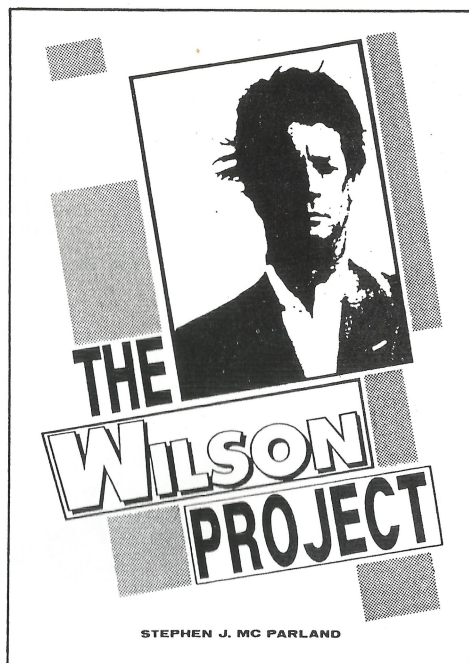
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THE WILSON PROJECT focuses on a 12 month period - 1986/87 when Beach Boy BRIAN WILSON was being reintroduced to contemporary music. Brought in to help was longtime friend and "legend" of the California music scene, singer/songwriter/producer GARY USHER.

THE WILSON PROJECT is about the interaction, the creative out pourings and the problems faced by Usher and Wilson as they struggled to produce a foundation upon which the first solo longplayer of the mainstay Beach Boy could be built. These problems centred around one individual in particular DR. EUGENE LANDY, whose svengali-like influence over Wilson shocked and worried Usher.

THE WILSON PROJECT exposes the total control exercised by "the good doctor" over his patient. It also concerns the battles that ensued for Brian's well-being and musical soul. It is a story that proves beyond a shadow of doubt that *FACT* is *STRANGER* than *FICTION*.

THE WILSON PROJECT is 154 pages of hitherto unknown information, including full recording particulars and 5 Appendices to give you the full *INSIDE* story; a sad melancholy tale, with humour, drama and all the machinations of a Shakespearean play.

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MINI - REVIEWS

"Little St. Nick" sung to the "Drive-In" track? But how? Well, like most things, it's simple once it's explained, and given that it's more of a demo than a finished item, it's fun enough... and of course, raises the question "which came first" - "Drive-In" or "Little St. Nick"? Who knows... The other bonus cut on CHRISTMAS ALBUM of a new-ish persuasion is THE LORDS PRAYER in stereo, and beautiful it is too. The purists may wail but I for one see no harm in having classic tracks available in both formats. Not issued in the U.K.

"Is There A Chance", a title first associated with Brian's second solo album and later dropped, mysteriously appears on David Foster's RIVER OF LOVE CD, perhaps because it was mixed by one Humberto Gaticia, also said to have worked with Brian lately. The song itself is not anything to get too worked up about, but then, of course, we're hearing it at best second-hand, and with no BW input beyond a co-composer credit. Pleasant enough but no earth-shaker.

AGD

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. LITTLE SAINT NICK
(Brian Wilson) | 10. WHITE CHRISTMAS
(Irving Berlin) |
| 2. THE MAN WITH ALL THE TOYS
(Brian Wilson) | 11. I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
(W. Kent & Gannon) |
| 3. SANTA'S BEARD
(Brian Wilson) | 12. AULD LANG SYNE
(Traditional) |
| 4. MERRY CHRISTMAS, BABY
(Brian Wilson) | BONUS TRACKS |
| 5. CHRISTMAS DAY
(Brian Wilson) | 13. LITTLE SAINT NICK (Single Version)
(Brian Wilson) |
| 6. FROSTY THE SNOWMAN
(S. Nelson-J. Rollins) | 14. THE LORD'S PRAYER
(Albert Hay Malotte) |
| 7. WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE
(John Hopkins) | 15. LITTLE SAINT NICK (Alternate Take)
(Brian Wilson) |
| 8. BLUE CHRISTMAS
(B. Hayes-J. Johnson) | 16. AULD LANG SYNE (Alternate Take)
(Traditional) |
| 9. SANTA CLAUS IS COMIN' TO TOWN
(M.F. Coats-H. Gillespie) | Produced by BRIAN WILSON |



1ST JANUARY 1992

The subscription rate for the magazine was last increased in October 1988. Since then the production cost has risen by 30%, this is largely due to the number of plates that have to be made for reproduced articles, etc. The feedback that we have received on this has been very favourable. Also, the cost of posting has risen by some 40%, thus following long discussion the rates are now as follows:

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ROY GUDGE
Treasurer

LETTERS

To Mike and all at **STOMP**

Thanks for the last six issues of **STOMP**, it's been a real eye-opener. Lots of things were new to me - the SMILE obsession, the Eugene Landy thing - better than TV! Keep the articles coming. For new boys like me it makes fascinating reading - especially as no-one seems to tell exactly the same story (how long ago was it? 30 years. Sometimes they make it sound like 300!).

Will the Beach Boys ever record again, will Brian ever finish his second album? The real question is can they still cut it and if they can, do they want to? Judging by people's reactions to the bonus tracks on the CDs (and the avid collectors' demand for slightly illegal material unavailable officially), perhaps a new album of old material (previously unreleased) would be more welcome/commercial.

It was nice to see you reviewing records other than Beach Boys issues (like the Jan & Dean albums), although I can see the connection. How about some articles about Brian's co-writers Gary Usher, Roger Christian, Tony Asher?

NICK WATTS

-oOo-

Dear Mike

On this last tour, which was magic, the only thing that I was disappointed in was that at G.Mex at the N.E.C., which my young lads attended with me (ten and five), we couldn't get a programme. Could you please explain why?

Cheers

DAVE

Answer: Unfortunatley Dave (or perhaps fortunately for your wallet) there were no programmes printed for the tour.

MIKE

I'm fighting off bad relations

SIXTIES superstar Brian Wilson is steeling himself to give the performance of his life this morning.

The Beach Boy who had us all dreaming of endless California summers with his songs of sun and surf will once again line up with his musical family.

But this time, they are singing to a different tune.

His brother Carl, mother Audree and daughters Carnie and Wendy of the group Wilson Phillips, are seeking to have him declared legally incapable of running his own life.

Influence

They are asking the Santa Monica Superior Court to provide the 49-year-old with a surrogate parent.

Most of all, they want to free the musical genius from what they believe is the overwhelming influence of an unorthodox psychologist.

Brian, a recluse who admits he was spaced out on drugs during much of the Beach Boys' time at the top, is fighting to go on living the way he wants.

It is a bitter feud which has destroyed the harmony which was the Beach Boys' trademark.

Today the row shifts to the open courtroom, where a judge and jury will decide Brian's fate.

At the heart of the battle is Eugene Landy, Brian's former therapist and current business partner, who surrendered his psychologist's licence two years ago after being accused of misconduct.

Brian refers to the man who shares his office and home as his "good father", although Landy is only eight years his senior.

He insists Landy saved his life and what little is left of his sanity.

But his relatives claim Landy has taken control of his life — and money.

Brian acknowledges that he is not totally in control of his own destiny



IN TUNE: Brian with saviour Landy

by LIZ HODGSON in Los Angeles

but he blames years of drug-taking, not Landy. He points out that he is capable of going running, driving and working out. "Drugs put a gash in my mind," he admits. To demonstrate his independence, he agreed to split with Landy for three months earlier this year and the two are now severing their business ties.

But when they tried to divide their assets, Carl Wilson claimed Landy was demanding too much.

"I think my family has over-reacted," says Brian. "He has no control over my thoughts or mind. We are partners who have been through hell together and have come into the light. He is the greatest

psychologist I ever met. He saved my life."

Brian's lawyer Don Engel says the musician's family are wrong.

"I am convinced that, when necessary, he has been perfectly able to make difficult, independent decisions," he says.

"I have to take into account Brian's genuine feelings about Landy — he is grateful for Landy saving his life."

But the Wilson family's lawyer Barry Langberg is asking for the court to appoint a conservator who has Brian's "best interests at heart".

Landy entered Brian Wilson's life in 1976. Years of drug taking, coupled with depression, had driven the Beach Boys' leader deep into his shell and other psychologists had struggled to help.

Landy launched an unorthodox and radical course of treatment, including 24-hour a day care and padlocking the fridge to stop the singer gorging himself.

Landy was sacked a few months later but Brian simply withdrew still further, frequently staring into space while on stage.

In 1982 Landy returned, on a salary of £262,000, moving in with Brian and isolating him from friends, family, food and drug dealers.

Socialise

In three years Brian slashed his weight by nearly half from 24 stone and began to socialise again.

Landy stepped down as psychologist and became Brian's business partner, earning £187,000 a year.

Brian began songwriting again, releasing two commercially unsuccessful but critically acclaimed albums. He still refuses to perform with the Beach Boys.

The tortured star has just written his autobiography *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, dedicated to Landy who also gets a third of the royalties.

This led to accusations that Landy helped write it to defend his controversial methods.

"Landy has made an astronomical sum of money off Brian," says Langberg. "Brian is impaired in his ability to exercise independent judgment. Landy has taken full advantage."

Landy believes he will be portrayed as the bad guy. "Brian is the victim, the family are the heroes, I am the villain," he says.

The biggest sadness for Brian is seeing his family stand against him, although they claim it is for his own good.

"The fact that my mother is involved really scrambles my brain," he says sadly. "I don't think she loves me."

CONCERT REVIEW

The Beach Boys : Tokyo Budokan - 2nd Nov 1991 6.30 pm

Seeing the Beach Boys in concert these days is rather like doing the same "spot the difference" competition you've been attempting for years. Most of the picture leaves you with a numb feeling of déjà-vu, while you merely ring the tired old changes: is Brian with them? Which four songs are different from the last tour? How long is Al's pony-tail? Will it be Adrian Baker or Jeff Foskett singing all the difficult bits?

But for the 10,000 young Japanese who streamed across the moat toward the palatial Main Gate of Tokyo's second-biggest concert venue, this was an opportunity to see a highly popular band who haven't properly graced these shores since shortly after the Budokan was built for the '64 Olympics. The grandeur of the surroundings promised much, but my hopes were dashed when I discovered that all the merchandise was identical to the 1989 UK tour's! Even down to the appalling programme.

The show started in time-honoured fashion to the slightly faster intro of "California Girls". What else? Only the shy audience's "mexican wave" was missing. Next up of course were the six cheerleaders, sporting one token Japanese girl. The crowd lapped them (her?) up. Insulting though these Beach Beauties are to a "Sunflower" purist like me, I have to admit that they are a godsend; they help hide the fact that the Beach Boys basically have very little charisma. They move about (if they do at all) like elephants, with none of the "star" quality of many other ageing stars, like, say, Mick Jaggar.

That other "Michael" rock legend, the Love variety, was his usual jocular and painful self, making few allowances for the audience's lack of English! He did make one attempt to "identify" with his Asian audience by claiming "we really love that harmony". Uh huh. Otherwise, all the hoary old jokes were there: the creaking joints on "Be True To Your School" and stealing a laugh from Bruce's "Liberace" shirt, but there was a delightful moment as Mike was launching into the band's "old clonker" (the car medley) Proclaiming that they had never sung about a Toyota, a Mitsubishi, or the like, he was reminded, by a voice at the back, of a certain sponsorship they enjoyed back in 1964...! Sadly, Mike Love's performance did not make up for the slurry of embarrassments. His voice was undoubtedly one of the key elements in the group's early '60s success, but now, his self-parodying nasal whine serves only to irritate. His vocals on all but the ballads, "Kokomo" and "Back In The U.S.S.R." were shocking. I wish somebody would discretely play him a copy of "Meant For You" to remind him that he can sing!

In contrast, Bruce was, like guitar stalwart Ed Carter, quiet, professional reliable and under-used. It was great to hear him singing "Do You Wanna Dance?" with such enthusiasm, and to revel in his stodgy but romantic rendition of "Please Let Me Wonder". Al Jardine too was on terrific form. From the very first note of "You're So Good To Me" to the last he played on Bruce's keyboard as he sauntered off at the end, it was clear that Al was having a great time here. There's a first time for everything, I suppose! Dancing, stomping and shaking his tambourine, he was the only original member who moved with any spontaneity - quite a sight for sore eyes. (Before you ask, yes of course he fluffed some lyrics; this time the first verse of "Crocodile Rock" and a mistimed intro to "Rhonda". At least he saw the funny side...).

Anchorman Adrian Baker did a fine job throughout, even if his falsetto leads on "Don't Worry Baby" and "Crocodile Rock" were way down in the otherwise excellent mix. Billy Hinsche was even better: full of life and energy, and playing a great organ solo on "Rhonda". Sporting a Japanese university graduate's "hachimaki" headband, he really got into the spirit of the evening. Boosted by Bobby Figueroa on keyboards, and an unfamiliar singer on percussion, this was easily the best I have ever seen the band. With Mike Kowalski behind the only drum kit on stage, they were the sharpest, tightest, they've been since the vastly underrated days of '72/3 and IN CONCERT.

This is more than I can say unfortunately for the overall quality of the vocals. The four frontmen sounded positively hoarse, even shaky, on "In My Room" and "Surfer Girl", the biggest shock being Carl. His voice was shot to pieces. It was a little sad to hear the once-best-voice-on-the-planet in such bad shape. He really struggled for the high notes, especially on the otherwise faultless "God Only Knows". Let's hope it's a cold.

But Carl's contribution to the show was not all doom and gloom. His guitar solos were electrifying, and won by far the best audience response of anything the band did. He was the only member to even attempt Japanese: "arigato!" (thank you). He danced too!

The band's live set is moving ever closer towards one "block" of medleys. They start with the Customary Openers, with only "Good To Me" as a genuinely nice surprise. Then there's a slow patch, followed by the covers, the car songs, the "Dancing" Trilogy, another slow section, a token glance at PET SOUNDS, then the Number Ones and the Surf Numbers. The combined effect is like being force-fed your favourite food. "California" taken to a consumerist extreme. Some ruthless axing is desperately needed here, I feel. The six-song "rod" medley is a total drag, in more ways than one, and frankly "Still Cruisin'" is so pedestrian it couldn't cruise if it tried. Al almost fell asleep on "Little G.T.O.", as did the audience on "Wipe Out", which, straight after the concert's great finale, fell flat. Most of the covers are highly enjoyable in their own right, however, "U.S.S.R.", "Dancin' In The Street" and "Crocodile Rock" were particularly punchy, the latter a 1000% improvement on the weedy Gus Dudgeon job on "Two Rooms". But the combined effect of eleven songs not written by Beach Boys is one of "fakeness". For some time now, the group has been a mere commercial bandwagon, paroding the songs they believe the punters want. The alarming fact is that the current set contains not one song written by the group in the twenty years between 1968 and 1988. What I'd give to sit like the two hundred Japanese in the very front block at the Budokan: stock-still, in my suit, listening intently to "Surf's Up" or "California Saga"! Dream on.

In the meantime I just have to resign myself to go with the flow, quietly clapping away, joining in on the choruses and cheering at the cheerleaders. I was the only member of the audience to move out of his seat row. I was naturally turned straight back. But, for all their strict social codes and regulations, the Japanese have changed radically in the 25 years since the back cover of PET SOUNDS. It is the Beach Boys who have not.

SEAN MACREAVY



JAPANESE BOOTLEG CORNER

PART TWO

There comes a time, even amongst the most ardent of Beach BOys fans, when we have to exclaim "Enough!"

The recent explosion of not one, not two but seven different SMILE bootleg CDs on Japanese shelves inside two months leaves me begging to them to stop. Sadly, only one or two are worth having...

CHAPTER ONE DIGITAL RECORDING CO 25145:

BRIAN WILSON : SMILE

This 21-track CD is the newest of the bunch, and on outside appearances, promises much. The sleeve looks terrific, with the original SMILE jacket shrunk down beneath full colour titles. The back cover sees Brian in his bath in that classic pose, holding aloft the ENDLESS SUMMER gold disc. And what's this? They've found "I'm in Great Shape" - it's track number 4!! No such luck. This CD merely puts together an almost-complete-best-of-the-available-Smile-sessions-so-far, with the familiar "Holidays" in slot 4 with the wrong title. Oh well... This release is a slight improvement over the ground-breaking SMILE II CD of 1989, as it includes some key episodes which its predecessor omitted. For instance, it begins with Brian's performance of "Surf's Up" on TV in 1966, minus Leonard Bernstein's voice-over, then moves through familiar territory with a 15-minute "Good Vibrations", the ramshackle "Vegetables/Mama Says", the short take of "Can't Wait Too Long" and numerous "Bicycle Rider" themes scattered hither and thither.

In most cases the compiler really has made an effort to select the best available versions, without recourse to released material. Only the "Cantina" rendition of "Heroes and Villains", and the "chant" section of "Cool Cool Water" have seen official release. "Heroes" here is identical to the SMILE II boot, but is missing "oom ma pa" vocal intro, and has the "Cantina" version tagged on to the beginning, making it 9 mins 44 in all. Untidy as it is, this is a glorious collection of cinematic, musical snapshots, and surely the finest culmination of Brian Wilson's work to be encapsulated in one song.

Other nice bonuses are a 3.02 "George Fell Into His French Horn" (for those people who enjoy that sort of thing), "Cabinessence", with just the "Doing-doing" vocals, and one of my personal favourite Brian Wilson recordings: "Wonderful" (with vocals). I still have fond memories of hearing this for the first time at an early '80s Convention. Gorgeous.

The sound quality of most tracks is pretty good, but some of the editing is extremely shoddy, particularly on "Water". The booklet is interesting, if only because it reproduces some of the SMILE lyrics in their original, tantalising form. This means however that they bear little relation to what's actually on the disc... only the lyrics to "Our Prayer" are 100% present and correct!

I would recommend this CD only to those people who are yet to "break the duck", and purchase their first SMILE boot. A good "Greatest Hits", but frankly, for the legions of us awaiting a fresh shipment of newly-discovered treasures, the "Bicycle Rider" is simply back-peddalling.

SMILE. THE EARLY YEARS - SPA 02-CD 3317

Although this CD has only just surfaced in Japan, it was originally produced in the EEC in 1989, and bears more than a striking resemblance to the 1985 SMILE VOLUME TWO vinyl boot. The sound quality of this release is hardly exemplary, but it does offer a permanent and much-improved copy of alternative versions which we first heard way back in the early '80s on those dreadful tapes, and which now have been superceded by "better" versions. For example "Barnyard" is a different mix, in stereo, longer and with less echo than the segment which turned up on the SMILEY SMILE 2-fer CD last year as the end of "Heroes and Villains". Similarly "Tones" is the earlier cut without the staccato string backing, and "Cabinessence" features only the basic "Who Ran The Iron Horse" and "Have You Seen The Grand Coulee" vocals. "You Are My Sunshine" is also without Dennis's lead vocal.

However, there are some nice surprises. "Vegetables" here is none other than the 1967 Laughing Gravy version - alias the wayward wailings of one Dean Torrence - with its unconvincing backing track allegedly produced by Brian for SMILE. The real surprise though comes with "Do You Dig Worms", which is a very different version from that which has appeared on all recent bootlegs. Very loosely pieced together, this production is murkier, and the vocals are further back in the mix. This adds to the mysterious quality of the song. Most puzzling is who sings the "wa hala loo lay" section. It sounds very much like Dennis and/or Carl to these ears, and has a very different character to Brian's more ambient and clearer rendition. Very curious.

There are two versions of "Good Vibrations" here: the first is a badly-copied recording straight from the RARITIES LP, while the second is almost exactly as premiered on the Bob Harris Radio Show in the Seventies, with Brian (twice) explaining how he intends to splice it together. Stuck on the end of this is a very repetitive and patchily-edited summary of all bits and pieces of the song which have ever existed! One bonus is an unfamiliar instrumental verse and chorus which boast an extremely drunken theramin part!

All three of the "Fire" sessions are included, which is a plus, as well as six minutes of "George Fell Into His French Horn": a trying listening experience for even the keenest fan. This version includes the doubtless legendary "sticking valves" exchange... 'Nuff said.

Can't Wait Too Long" is a messier edit of the seamless version on the aforementioned 2-fer. "Heroes and Villains" is a poor quality copy of the original released mix, as is "Wind Chimes", both complete with pops and crackles from the old bootleg acetate! Inexcusable!

With its inclusion of non-SMILE tracks and its often dreadful sound quality this CD release is, in retrospect, well behind the times. In places the master tape sounds as if it were fed through a kind of "phaser" effects box for mock stereo. It didn't work on TODAY, SUMMER DAYS or PET SOUNDS and it certainly doesn't work here. Only the full-colour sleeve booklet features great reproduction. Shame the photos have now to do with SMILE... Unless you're willing to cough up £20 for the pleasure of hearing Brian's spoken intro to "Child Is Father To the Man" or three extra minutes of "George", or a different lead vocal on "Worms", I suggest you avoid this and wait for the definitive package.



RARE GEMS - BEACH BOYS

At last some respite from the deluge of SMILE bootlegs. This is a real treat: a compilation which, although perhaps a little too diverse, puts together on one disc some of the most sought-after recordings of the '60s and '70s. Unlike many of the recent bootleg releases (Polyphone in particular), which have simply cobbled together a ragbag of unconnected tracks, this has been compiled with not a little thought and sensitivity to the music itself. The songs are grouped logically, following more or less the same running order as the double LP version, minus a Dennis interview, "California Girls" (live) and "Bugged At My Ol' Man" (1976) - these are still however listed on the sleeve. Ahem - very naughty.

The CD kicks off with five songs sung by Dennis, the first two taken from his BAMBOO sessions of 1977/8. "It's Not Too Late" is a gorgeous song, beautifully and subtly recorded, and graced with splendid vocals by both Dennis and Carl. On "Wild Situation" too, Dennis's voice is clearer and less rasping than on any other tracks of the same era. BAMBOO would have seen him bounce straight out of PACIFIC OCEAN BLUE with tremendous vigour and confidence. His music was simpler, less textured and emotional, but highly charged nonetheless. "I've Got a Friend", recorded at a 1972 concert, sees Dennis as the truly underrated and unrewarded songwriter of the band. The emotion and complexity of his 68-77 work surpassed even that of most of Brian's best. So strange then that TEN YEARS OF HARMONY featured not one of Dennis's officially released contributions to Beach Boys albums... It's fun then to hear Dennis knock off ADULT CHILD's "Baseball" as if he were simply singing this dumb stuff to keep big brother happy. Only Brian could have persuaded him to attempt a falsetto! However from the state of Dennis's voice on "You Are So Beautiful", it is clear that this live performance from Virginia was recorded not so long before December 1983...

Fans of Brian's prolific 76-77 songwriting binges have a treat in store. Included here are four demos for LOVE YOU and ADULT CHILD. "Still I Dream Of It" (in stereo) is more measured and smoother on the ears than the others, but even its beauty is blown away by the sheer simplicity of the LOVE YOU songs. "Mona" is so simple and so catchy it's criminal, but is yet another example of BW's genius for immediate yet lasting pop melodies. Whereas this song did actually benefit from its final arrangement, "Love Is A Woman" and "Airplane" are more convincing without their perky, bitty backing on the 1977 album. "Airplane" in particular is a delightful ballad, sung with such feeling. Brian's voice is rough but gentle, and this track more than any other shows him at his most raw and exposed. There are dozens of false starts, bum notes and other cock ups, but these add to the very personal nature of the music.

Three live tracks also from 1977, offer further proof that this was a great all-round year in that chequered decade. OK, so "Everyone's In Love With You" is no "Caroline, No", but when was the last time the band played a down-beat, subtle '70s album track in concert? Nice, but I do cringe when I hear Mike tell Carl to shut up, crawl back into his corner facing the organ and just play his guitar!" "All This Is That", all eight minutes of it, is a different kettle of fish, with Mike introducing the woodwind section which had won rave reviews: Charles Lloyd. His sax work on this track is stunning and a great complement to the beautiful pulse of electric piano and shuffling percussion. A shame Mike blows it again by insisting the otherwise appreciative audience to join in on the chorus of the lame "Country Pie". A good stomper, but hardly a tragedy they never committed it to vinyl...

Next up are two treasures for collectors: decent quality recordings of two of Brian's rarest early productions, Bob and Sheri's "Humpty Dumpty" and The Castells' "I Do". Although the latter has the same backing track as the recently unleashed BBs version (and hence the same drive and energy) the former does little to justify the £200 being asked in Japan for the "Collectors' Series" 7" single. It boasts the most embarrassing lyrics this side of "Kona Christmas": "Hoo, make a little hump now/Take your feet and dump now/... Do the Humpty Dumpty yeah yeah/Humpty Humpty Dumpty Dump..." Unfortunate to say the least!

The CD's excellent live rosta continues with the group's 1964 Ed Sullivan TV show appearance - wobbly but well-recorded renditions of "Little St Nick", "Monster Mash" and "Papa Oom-Mow-Mow" - plus a rousing version of "Johnny B Goode" from sweden in the same year. Brian's "I'm So Lonely" and "Male Ego" from the 1985 Malibu Benefit gig are next (in good quality) and a very crisp (and optimistic) "Everybody Wants To Live" from ADULT CHILD closes the set at over 70 minutes.

This CD is a high quality bargain for any collector, putting a feast of hard-to-find goodies under one lid.

-oOo-

TRACK LISTING: It's Not Too Late/Wild Situation/Baseball (It's Trying To Say)/I've Got A Friend / You Are So Beautiful/My Solution/ Mona/Still I Dream Of It/Love Is A Woman/Airplane/ Everyone's In Love With You/All This Is That/Country Pie/ Humpty Dumpty - Bob & Sheri/I Do - The Castells/Little St Nick/Papa Oom Mow Mow/Monster Mash/Johnny B Goode/ I'm So Lonely/Male Ego/Everybody's Got To Live.

SEAN MACREAVY

A D V E R T S

IT'S BACK!



CALIFORNIA MUSIC MAGAZINE "THE MUSIC OF THE BEACH"
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THE WILSON PROJECT by Stephen McParland (as reviewed elsewhere) contains approximately 200 mind blowing pages of never before revealed recent Brian history. S.A.E. for details of how to obtain a copy of this limited edition from Kingsley Abbott, "Hollycot", High Common, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2HS.

A D V E R T S

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N E W S

Just as we go to press comes the news that Brian's conservatorship lawsuit has been settled out of court, with the family being the victors. Exact details aren't available, but according to early reports, Brian's business relationship with Landy is in the process of being dismantled and whilst he will still receive day to day guidance (whether or not from Landy is unclear), he is essentially free to direct his own life. Brian is reported to be 'happy' with the outcome. Of the lawsuit against A & M there is no further news.

Brian's separation from Landy could well improve the prospects of his second solo album, SWEET INSANITY, being released sometime in 1992 on a label other than Sire: according to one source, a deal may be close to being struck. However, according to at least two other sources of high repute, SWEET INSANITY is unreleasable in it's current form due to a combination of dubious arrangements and weak material, and Sire were fully justified in rejecting it. We'll see.

Having returned from Japan (see gig review elsewhere), the Beach Boys are currently laying low, hopefully considering the upcoming 30th Anniversary year. A TV special is said to be in the early stages of production, but of recording and/or concert plans, nothing has been heard.

Much the same can be said of the "Crocodile Rock" cassette single reported to have been released in the States; no-one we know has so much as seen a copy, leading to thoughts that maybe it's been withdrawn. Any sightings, please advise.

One mystery has been solved with the discovery of THE ABSOLUTE BEST OF THE BEACH BOYS VOLUME I CD (Vol. 2 having been reported in **STOMP 86**). The track listing is: "Surfin' Safari/Surfin' USA/Shut Down/Surfer Girl/Little Deuce Coupe/In My Room/Fun, Fun, Fun/Don't Worry Baby/Warmth Of The Sun/Be True To Your School/I Get Around/All Summer Long/Little Honda/Wendy/Girls On The Beach/Do You Wanna Dance?/When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)/Dance, Dance, Dance/409/Help Me Rhonda".

August 7th was declared Al Jardine Day in his home town of Lima, Ohio, and to mark the occasion Al was presented with the key to the city. Back in the studio, along with Carl and son Matthew, Al laid down some backing vocals on "Summer On Signal Hill", a track from Max Weinberg's upcoming solo album (Max is best known as drummer in Bruce Springsteen's E. Street Band).

Odds to close: David Leaf is penning the Beatles and Beach Boys chapters of a book celebrating Capitol Records' 5th anniversary... still on the book front, Brian has been touring to plug his so-called autobiography (see review elsewhere).. and on Pete Dinklage's INFAMY album is a track entitled "Everything (Song For Dennis Wilson)", featuring backing vocals by Tony Rivers, Mick Clarke and Antony Thompson.

AGD & MIKE

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